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Hammond, John Hays

Success

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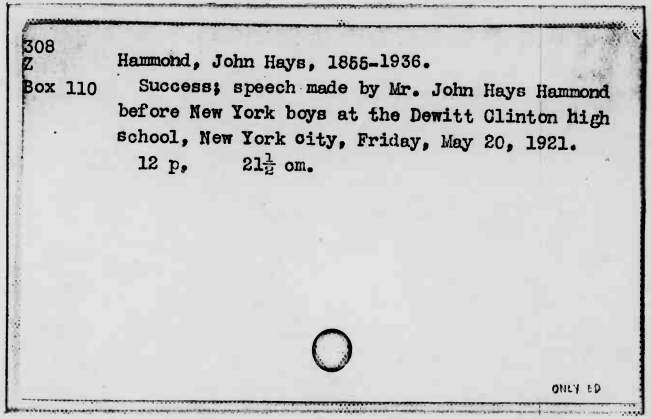
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Hammond, John Hays, 1855-1936.
Success; speech made by Mr. John Hays Hammond before New York boys at the Dewitt Clinton high school, New York city, Friday, May 20, 1921.
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SUCCESS

AN ADDRESS

delivered by

JOHN HAYS HAMMOND

DEWITT CLINTON HIGH SCHOOL
NEW YORK CITY

MAY 20, 1921

308
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Box 110

SUCCESS

SPEECH MADE BY

MR. JOHN HAYS HAMMOND

BEFORE

NEW YORK BOYS

AT THE

DEWITT CLINTON HIGH SCHOOL

NEW YORK CITY

FRIDAY, MAY 20, 1921.

Anonymous typ
5-24-22

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Every one blessed with imagination—that motive power of world progress—enjoys speculating as to the future. It is a pleasant and often a profitable diversion. How few of us thought at the time, that the writings of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells were other than highly fantastic, and yet, how many of their predictions have been realized within a single generation.

Even those of us who belong to the so-called "matter-of-fact" class, and who are not wont to indulge in idle dreams cannot but be curious as to what is to be the future of this great country of ours, and since its destiny lies in the aspiration and achievement of the youth of to-day, it behooves us to interest ourselves in this—at once our greatest national liability and our greatest national asset.

It has been my good fortune to have had an unusually extensive and intimate experience with young men in different parts of the world, and this circumstance will, I hope, justify me in accepting the esteemed invitation to address the boys of the DeWitt Clinton High School on this occassion.

I should not dignify the subject as an "address," but rather as a heart-to-heart talk, telling you what—as a result of my experience—I regard as indispensable and chief factors in a successfull career, and without any affectation of modesty, I would add:

"May you reck the rede than eir did the adviser."

M. W. L. July 10, '22.

SUCCESS

I ASSUME of course, at the outset, that every American boy is ambitious to make a success of his life, but before we discuss the subject of a successful career, let us have a clear understanding as to what constitutes success.

Now as to a definition of success, there is, I think, a great diversity of opinion among us. Some measure success by the degree of fame achieved in professional work; in public life; or in any vocation that brings us prominently and favorably before the people of our community, of our nation, or of the world. Others—and I fear they are in the majority—measure success by the money we accumulate.

Of all standards by which success is measured, none is so meritricious as that of wealth, and yet I do not agree with the view often expressed that a narrow limit should be imposed as to the amount of money a man should be allowed to acquire, even by ability, honest effort, and frugality.

I should say in contradistinction to the question, How much have you? in determining the limit of a man's wealth, that we should ask the questions:

First - How did you get it?
Second - What are you doing with it?

Did you acquire it honestly? and in so doing, Did you render a service to your fellow men? Are you spending it in a way to promote the well-being of the community? If so, I would say that you are entitled to all you have and the more you have the better it is for all concerned. The

fortune made by a man, generally speaking, is an incident in his day's work, rather than the goal for which he has striven.

A criterion of success should be what one has achieved in any capacity through able, honest, self-sacrificing effort, not merely for his own advantage, but concurrently—and this is the sina qua non—for the benefit of his fellow-beings. It is most important that this consideration of success should be impressed upon those who are starting out upon their lives clearly. It should be inculcated in the home, taught in the schools and preached in the pulpits, and become the recognized standard of popular approbation.

We are often asked, what are the essentials for a successful career? First of all, I would place the possession of character. An honest, clean-cut, straight-forward, conscientious young fellow, ambitious, perservering, and last, but by no means least, level-headed would, in my opinion, possess 75% of the essentials of success, and while in relative importance I would not attach more than 25% to the possession of an education, and I say this without in any degree depreciating the inestimable value of an education. But without character, the monument to success would be as unstable as an edifice where the mortar is deficient in lime.

I am speaking, of course, of true abiding success. There is no real success unless it carries with it the high esteem of one's associates, and there is no real success attainable, unless one preserves his own self-respect. It is most important to differentiate between notoriety and fame. Many young men and older ones too for that matter, are eager to get into the limelight, preferring to be damned, than mentioned not at all.

Fortunately in our country of opportunity, the gates are open to all. The open sesame is the word "ready." Ready to go into the fields of opportunity and plant the seed that by honest endeavor, self-sacrifice and ability,

will bear rich fruit, provided the seed is sown by worthy ambition. We must be ready, for as Shakespeare said: "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taking up the flood, leads on to fortune."

The Chinese have an adage that—"The Gods cannot help a man who loses opportunity." Failure on the part of many is due, not so much to the lack of opportunity, as to the lack of initiative, of inability to seize the opportunity presented, or of unwillingness to make the self-sacrifice always indispensable to achievement. Lack of decision and procrastination are fatal qualities. The mariner who delays his sailing waiting for propitious winds is left far behind by him who has the courage to face adverse winds starting out on his voyage.

Many young men are too easily disheartened by temporary adversity, failing to recognize the fact that however unwelcomed adversity may be, it develops in a man of strong character, those latent qualities, the exercise of which commands success. They should

> "be like a bird that, pausing in its flight,
> Awhile on bough too light,
> Feels it give way beneath it, and yet sings,
> Knowing that it hath wings."

One of the first things to get out of your mind is that luck is a determining element in a successful career. Emerson says that "Shallow men believe in luck; that strong men believe in cause and effect." Luck, I would say in the language of the farmer, is the volunteer crop of life. It is welcome, but is not dependable. The real crop must be sown and reaped by the sweat of one's brow. Waste no time in looking for good luck horseshoes, or four-leaf clovers. Adopt the motto of the plucky cowboy that "Life aint in holding a good hand, but in playing a pore hand well."

This is, as I have said, a land of opportunity. Study the lives of our great Americans who have won enduring

fame, and whose memories are revered, not only by their own countrymen, but by the civilized world. Read and reread the lives of Lincoln, of Franklin for inspiration; study the careers of Edison, Schwab, Carnegie, Frick, and names innumerable in our history, and take courage those of you who are not born with golden spoons in your mouths!

These boys are denied the privilege of being compelled —to use a paradox—to develop their character early and thus they are prevented from acquiring the inestimable traits of initiative, resourcefulness, and industry. They become enfeebled through enervating environment, and therefore, are not so well equipped to fight the battle of life, as are the sons of poorer parents.

Let me tell you the splendid success made by two engineers who were greatly handicapped at the commencement of their professional careers. One was handicapped by the lack of education. He applied to me for a job when I was in charge of mines in Mexico. This was in 1882. He had no technical education outside the knowledge of assaying. I liked his intelligence, alert appearance, and started him on a small salary.

After a little trial I began to discover that besides good judgment, ability and skill, he had an intense interest in every detail of his work, and I saw that his knowledge of it was increasing out of all proportion to the experience he was getting. I found he was putting all his spare time in study, getting every book he could find on the subject, picking up information of all kinds from every one he talked to, working late in the night, perfecting himself in the details of the work far outside the province of his own job.

After I left the management, he was appointed on my recommendation as my successor. Two or three years afterwards he left Mexico on account of ill health. He came to California and worked for me a short time as assistant manager of a mine under my control, and then on my recommendation was appointed superintendent of an important mine in Idaho. That mine is today the greatest silver-lead mine in the world, and to him is due much of the credit for its success. When I went to South Africa, I took him with me as my chief assistant. This was in 1893. He remained with me in Africa until 1897, when he returned to this country. He has not only accumulated a fortune of upwards of a million dollars by his investments in mining properties, but had equipped himself technically so as to win a place in the front rank of the engineering profession.

The other example was that of an engineer who, though he had technical education, was greatly handicapped physically because of the paralysis of one of his legs. In spite of this serious handicap, through sheer grit, he went to make examinations for me into Mexico, South America and many inaccessible parts of the world. He finally died after he had reached middle age, having acquired a competency and high rank in his profession.

I could give you any number of illustrations of this kind, showing what young men in spite of great handicaps can achieve through force of character.

There are many what might be called adventitious aids to success. For example a pleasing address. This may seem a small consideration, but often it is a most important aid to success. Too little attention is given by parents to teaching their children what to call good manners. Many promising young fellows have lost the golden opportunity because of the lack of a pleasing address. It is of great advantage for a young man to be temperamentally an optimist. "For a merry heart goes all the day; your sad tires in a mile - a."

No great constructive work is ever initiated and carried out by a pessimist. The pessimist is usually one lacking imagination and vision. It is all well and good to be conservative, but there is such a thing as ultra-conservatism. A man should not pride himself on being always in

the frame of mind of the man "from Missouri." Too many of them are like the countryman, who, when he first saw a rhinocerous at the Zoo, said: "There aint no such animile."

In my early days as a mining engineer, educated engineers were not looked up to with respect or treated with much consideration by the so-called "practical miner." It used to be said by the "practical miner" that in forming an estimate of the value of a mine, no one could see beyond the end of the pick. Today a man who is not able to form an estimate of the value of ore bodies at very considerable distances beyond the end of the pick through his knowlege of geology and his imagination would attain no professional standing. A short-sighted man reminds me of the fellow who went out into his back yard to stop a dog fight, but did not notice the presence of a large elephant that had appeared on the premises. His mind and vision were absorbed by the dogs.

It is likewise of advantage to be by nature a good mixer, not, however, of the artificial kind of "glad-hand artist," who endeavors to win popularity for selfish purposes and at the sacrifice of principle and self-respect. Popularity of the latter kind is of short duration. The born good mixer is one who has tact; tact comes from a kindly nature, and is the distinctive exponent of a true gentleman.

What is inelegantly, but aptly, termed a "grouch" is a very unfortunate obsession. Do not undermine your resolution, nor waste your energy in proclaiming that the "time is out of joint" and that the world is going to the "demnition bow-wows,"—for it isn't. Don't incline to pessimism because of the croakings of stock gamblers in the canyons of Wall Street. Their outlook on life is very circumscribed; their opinions ephemeral. Rather go out to the top of Pike's Peak, or even the Woolworth Building and get a wider prospect, and consequently a more reliable and optimistic view of the future of this great land of opportunity. Grouches, grievances, resentments, which are often inspired by envy, become cumulative burdens and make a heavy load to bear in addition to the normal burdens of the day's work.

A sense of charity may incline your neighbor to listen with sympathy to the hard-luck story of an older man, but the trials and tribulations of a younger man are not calculated to enhance the esteem of his auditors. There is unfortunately today a lack of reverence among young men for their elders. The spirit of iconoclasm is crowding out that of idealism. The examples of worth-while men should be an inspiration to the younger generation. For it is "in youth we learn, but only in age we understand." Conversely I would add that older men could find something akin to an elixir of life in associating with youth.

It is unfortunate that the eternal verities are learned by experience only, and that the coming generation cannot visualize the mistakes of their elders and profit by them. It seems that many of the great lessons of life must be learned only in conformity with the theory that a burnt child dreads the fire, and that it is necessary in the process of evolution, that our children have to incur the penalty of mistakes that their parents have made in gaining experience. If some of these admonitions should be designated by the sign "Beware of the third rail," or of the live wire carrying many thousands of volts, they might become effective "don'ts," passed on from one generation to another.

Many young men fail in promotion because they have no other ambition than to "hold down their job." Such young men cannot successfully compete with the ambitious fellow who not only does his allotted work satisfactorily, but who also devotes his spare time to learning the work of those above him, so that when a vacancy occurs, he is competent to step into a higher position. In other words

the ambitious boy, the boy who makes a success of life, is willing to render more service than he is paid for, in order to qualify himself for advancement.

One of the greatest enemies of success, as you have been told times innumerable—but this fact shall not deter me from repeating it—is conceit;—conceit which manifests itself in what is aptly, if not elegantly, called the "big head." There are many "big heads" graduated from college every year, but when the disease is not eradicated, the victims are soon "sized up" by the discriminating public and forthwith relegated to the category of mediocrity and thenceforth are but laggards, soon lost sight of in the race of life. A successful man usually has too many of the scars of battle to make it possible for him to enjoy looking at himself in a mirror.

Even self-made men are often victims of this disease, for such it really is. Men of this kind are particularly objectionable when they have some stroke of good luck, coming into the possession of wealth. When one sees examples of men of this class, he is very much tempted to plead poverity lest he be suspected of being a multimillionaire himself.

It was the inimitable Touchstone who said: "Call me not fool till Heaven hath sent me Fortune."

The "big head" that has attained his temporary, or more likely merely fancied success, has almost always reached the highest point of his self-conceited glory, and like Lucifier, falls never to rise again. For the rest of mankind, it is indeed a fortunate effacement.

You may rely upon it that the demeanor of the successful man is the absolute index of his mind and character. The really great man who achieves genuine success is of all men most modest as to his accomplishment. He has, of course, some proper and desirable self-respect, and also pride in his achievement, but he is not the least conscious that his success has been due to any greatness on his part,

ascribing it rather to that kind of genius that is synonomous with honesty of purpose and indefatigable endeavor.

The truly great man knows how insignificant are his achievements compared with the work before him, and would say, as did Cecil Rhodes, the great Empire Builder on his death-bed—a truly great man, and one of the most modest whom I have known—"So little done, so much to do."

This, as we all know, is an age of specialization, and the "Jack of all trades and master of none" has less opportunity than ever before. But to succeed even as a specialist and to attain the best results of which we are capable, we should build a broad base upon which to specialize.

For this reason I would urge young men to extend their knowledge by the reading of books which are not confined to their own line of work, since if they climb up the ladder of success and are brought into contact with men of large affairs, a comprehensive knowledge is of inestimable value.

A few words on the civic obligation of the young man of the day. There has been heretofore a lamentable, I am tempted to say, disgraceful lack of interest on the part of the business man in our country's political affairs. Politics has been regarded by some as merely of academic interest, and by others (with an assumption of unctuous rectitude) an unclean vocation. But the plain unvarnished reason for the failure of many business men to discharge their political duties is the unwillingness on their part to make the requisite sacrifice of social pleasure, of money, or of present business opportunities. Such men are shirking their civic responsibilities and should be so stigmatized by their fellow citizens.

There is, fortunately, a growing realization on the part of the public of the fact that the business prosperity depends fundamentally upon the political conditions of the country. Therefore from the point of view of self-enlight-

ened interest, young men as opportunity presents should participate in the political affairs of the community in which they live.

Remember this is your country, and it is up to you to safeguard its interest and to protect it, not only against the enemy from without, but the enemy within our gates.

With this admonition, I leave you:

"Strive to be such as you would wish others to consider you.—
This above all: To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

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